

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM OFFICE**  
**COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA 2006-2010**  
(December 2006)

The Consolidated Plan regulations require HUD local government grantees to adopt a Citizen Participation Plan. Cobb County originally developed a Citizen Participation Plan in 1988. Subsequent updates were conducted to the Plan in 1991, 1995, 1998, and 2003. This Plan reflects Cobb County's compliance with the HUD requirements for citizen participation in all appropriate HUD grant programs as of January 2004. The Plan contains the required elements listed in the Consolidated Plan regulations at **24 CFR 91.105(b)**. Cobb County conducts the planning and administration for the CDBG, HOME, and ESG Programs. Cobb County receives Housing Opportunities for Persons With Aids [HOPWA] funds indirectly through the City of Atlanta. Thus, HOPWA Planning and Administration functions are executed by the City of Atlanta's Grants Management Department.

**ENCOURAGEMENT OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

Cobb County has taken specific actions to provide for, and to encourage, increased participation in its housing and community development programs, particularly by persons of very low, low, and moderate income. Some of the actions include:

- Review of all citizen comments and incorporation of such comments in the Consolidated Plan, as applicable;
- Analyze the impact of Consolidated Plan program activities on neighborhood residents, particularly low and moderate income residents;
- Conduct Needs Assessments and appropriate on-site visits to each proposed project before including it in the Proposed Consolidated Plan;
- Meet with neighborhood groups to inform them about the Consolidated Plan, project eligibility, the program planning process, project selection and funding, and the project implementation process;

Cobb County will continue to provide a dialogue for open communication with its residents, particularly very low income, low income, and moderate income persons, concerning its HUD and DHR funded programs. Cobb County will strive to continuously increase residents participation in its housing, community development and human services programs by providing information on the ways that such persons/agencies might obtain potential funding. Techniques will include public housing meetings/forums, neighborhood meetings, presentations to civic associations, public hearings, faith-based meetings, newspaper articles and advertisements, TV 23 public access announcements, [Cobb County Government Access Channel], e-mail, feature stories, and individual personal contacts.

Since the initiation of the CDBG, HOME, ESG, and CSBG Programs in Cobb County, all cities within the county have joined the program. Cobb County makes a special effort to provide timely and accurate information about housing, community development and human services program activities to all of Cobb participating cities. Numerous meetings are held and written documents are transmitted to all the participating cities. Many of the heaviest concentrations of low and

moderate income persons reside within the boundaries of these cities. Active participation in the Cobb housing, community development, and human services programs is the primary means to insure that all low and moderate income residents can participate fully in these HUD and DHR assisted activities.

### **ACCESS TO RECORDS, LOCAL MEETINGS AND INFORMATION**

Cobb County will continue to provide reasonable and timely access to all Public Hearings and local public meetings. Information and records relating to Cobb County housing, community development, and human services program activities are made available to the public for review and comment, according to the requirements of Federal, State, and local laws and regulations (HUD and DHR).

Each city participating in the Cobb County CDBG Program provides a forum for local resident input on proposed projects during one or more of its Council meetings. Projects are discussed and approved by the respective participating cities prior to submission to the Cobb CDBG Program Office.

Notices of public hearings are widely publicized throughout the County. Two weeks before the public hearings are held, at least one advertisement is placed in the local newspaper of general circulation (Marietta Daily Journal). The advertisements are "display ads" or "legal ads" which appear in the sections of the newspaper most likely to be read by citizens.

Copies of public hearing notices, descriptive information concerning HUD and DHR-assisted housing, community development and human services programs, Proposed Consolidated Plan [and any amendments] and Annual Performance Reports are placed in accessible locations [the Cobb County Central Library, participating cities, and the Cobb County CDBG Program Office] in Cobb County to permit public review and comment. Copies of these documents are distributed to local housing and community development contact persons for dissemination to neighborhood groups and to low and moderate income persons. All documentation is maintained in the CDBG Program Office, indicating the opportunities provided to citizens to insure that all meetings, records, documents and related information are made readily accessible to the citizens of Cobb County.

### **CONSOLIDATED PLAN**

Before Cobb County adopts a Consolidated Plan or an amendment to a current Consolidated Plan or current Action Plan, it provides information including the amount of financial assistance the County expects to receive from HUD or DHR, and the range of activities the County expects to undertake (including the amount that will benefit persons of very low and low income), the plans to minimize the displacement of persons and the assistance to be provided to any persons displaced, will be made available to residents, public agencies, and other interested parties.

A summary of the proposed Consolidated Plan will be published in the official "County Organ", a local newspaper of general circulation [Marietta Daily Journal], and copies of the Proposed Plan will be available at libraries, government offices, and/or other public places. The summary will describe the contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan and will list locations where copies of the entire Plan can be examined. Substantial Amendments to the Plan will be advertised, and copies of any Amendment will be made available. As required by HUD regulations, Cobb County will provide a period of not less than thirty (30) calendar days from the date of public notice to receive comments from citizens.

Cobb County will provide citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the Consolidated Plan, and the County's use of HUD and DHR housing, community development and human services assistance, [including all assistance provided to Cobb County under the HOME, CSBG, HOPWA and ESG programs] during the preceding year. Interested parties should contact the CDBG Program Office for such information. Reasonable requests will be satisfied at the time of the request. If more detailed information is requested, which requires compilation of data, such requests will be fulfilled within ten (10) working days of the receipt of the request.

### **CRITERIA FOR CONSOLIDATED PLAN SUBSTANTIVE AMENDMENTS**

The Cobb County policy regarding Substantive Amendments to the Consolidated Plan requires that any changes in the Consolidated Plan, which meet the following criteria, require an opportunity for public comment:

- A. To make a change in its allocation priorities, or a change in the method of distribution of funds;
- B. To carry out an activity, using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan (including program income), not previously described in the Annual Action Plan;
- C. To change the original intent and purpose of an activity which no longer applies;
- D. The costs associated with a change in the scope of an activity increase or decrease by fifty-one percent (51%);
- E. The location of an activity changes to the extent that it does not serve the area population as described in the Consolidated Plan.

A Substantive Amendment is any deviation from the Strategic or Annual Plan that results in an overall change in the focus of Cobb County pertaining to the specific Goals, Objectives, Outputs, and Outcomes illustrated in the Consolidated Plan [FY 2003-2005].

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CITIZENS/AGENCIES**

The Cobb County CDBG Program Office will continue to provide technical assistance to Cobb County residents and agencies, particularly to those of very low and low income who request such assistance in developing project proposals, or who request other information (compliance requirements, program performance, funding information, etc.) covered by the Consolidated Plan. Project application forms are available for anyone and are distributed at no cost to all persons making a request. A "one-on-one" meeting will be arranged for individuals and groups representing such persons -- when necessary to explain the project eligibility, application, approval process, and the implementation requirements. The Cobb County CDBG Program Office staff will attend neighborhood meetings, and will meet with non-profit organizations and individuals to provide other specific technical assistance related to housing, community development and human services programs, as requested and as needed. In addition, Cobb County, as needed, will provide an annual technical assistance workshop for CDBG, HOME, ESG, and CSBG potential grantees to answer all questions and provide assistance in application preparation.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Cobb County will conduct a minimum of three public hearings annually to obtain citizens comments and concerns and to respond to proposals and questions throughout the program year. The public hearings will be held at different stages of the program year. They will be held at locations accessible to people with disabilities. The Public Hearings will be properly advertised and documented, and will include a list of attendees, public comments, available funds, proposed objectives and projects, and a description of the actual use of previous year funds. Written minutes of the public hearing will be available for review during normal business hours, or at other reasonable times, which may be arranged by special request.

1. **Needs Assessment Public Hearing:** This hearing will be conducted annually to determine the nature and types of assistance needed to address Cobb's priority needs. The Hearing is held at the beginning of the annual planning cycle to solicit input from residents, public housing agencies, and social services organizations on housing, community, and economic development needs. Cobb County will use the Needs Assessment Public Hearing to report to the citizens on prior year performance for its HUD and DHR assisted programs. A Summary of the Annual Performance Report will be available for review by the attendees.
2. **Proposed Projects Review:** A second Public Hearing is normally held at the close of the application cycle. The purpose of this Hearing is to present to the community all of the projects submitted for funding for the year. CDBG Program Office staff present to the public the results of the needs assessment process, including the proposed priorities for housing and non-housing needs, the proposed long and short term objectives for addressing those needs and the resources available for this purpose. In addition, participants are encouraged to provide input on the degree and extent to which proposed applications meets Cobb County's priority needs.
3. **Proposed Consolidated Plan Review:** Using resident input from the second public hearing, Cobb County will develop a strategic Consolidated Plan, or an Annual Action Plan. Activities proposed for funding with HUD and DHR housing and community development funds through Cobb County will be reviewed and appropriate recommendations will be made to the Cobb Board of Commissioners by the CDBG Program Office [with input from the Cobb County Manager]. The Plan, once approved by the Board of Commissioners, will be advertised for public review and comment. This third public hearing will be an additional opportunity for public comment.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY/COMPLAINT REVIEW PROCESS**

It is the policy of Cobb County to provide equal opportunity for services without regard to race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, political affiliation, presence of handicap or disability, or familial status.

Persons who feel that they have been discriminated against or who have a complaint pertaining to the Cobb County Consolidated Plan, Plan amendments, or Annual Performance Report, may file a complaint in writing to:

Cobb County Community Development Block Grant Program Office  
127 Church Street, Suite 270  
Marietta, Georgia 30060  
Attn: Mr. Lance Crawford, Director

The complaint must contain the following information:

- (1) Name and address of the person(s) filing the complaint;
- (2) A description of the act or acts considered to be in violation;
- (3) Other available pertinent information which will assist in the review and resolution of the complaint.

Such complaints should be filed within thirty (30) days of the alleged discriminatory act. A written response as to the disposition of the complaint will be issued by the Director no later than fifteen (15) working days following receipt of the complaint. A person who is dissatisfied with the response to complaint, or if the response is delayed more than fifteen (15) working days, may appeal in writing to:

Cobb County Government  
100 Cherokee Street, Suite 300  
Marietta, Georgia 30090-9605  
Attn: Mr. David Hankerson, County Manager

A written response on the disposition of the complaint will be issued by the County Manager not later than (30) working days following the receipt of the complaint. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response of the County Manager, he/she may submit the complaint, in writing, to:

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Georgia State Office of Community Planning and Development  
Five Points Plaza  
40 Marietta Street, N. W., 15<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30303-9812

No person shall intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any person because he/she has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any matter in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing related to a complaint.

The identity of complainants shall be kept confidential, except to the extent necessary to carry out or conduct investigations, hearings, or judicial proceedings in any matter in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing related to a complaint.

### **CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Cobb County will consider any comments or views of residents, agencies, or other interested parties received in writing or orally at Public Hearings, in preparing the final Consolidated Plan, amendments to the Plan, and the Annual Performance Report. A summary of these comments will be included in the final Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, or Annual Performance Report [CAPER].

### **PROVISIONS FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING AND HEARING IMPAIRED RESIDENTS**

Cobb County has a large segment of the population which is non-English speaking.. The number of non-English speaking residents generally does not present a problem during public hearings or

meetings. Arrangements have been made to provide interpreters at public hearings, upon request. Any non-English speaking resident who wishes to participate may contact the CDBG Program Office prior to the hearings so that adequate arrangements can be made. Such requests should be made at least five (5) working days prior to the hearing date to permit the CDBG Program Office to make arrangements.

Hearing impaired and other disabled persons who wish to participate in Public Hearings, and who need to have a person "sign" for them at the Public Hearing, should contact the CDBG Program Office via TTD 770-528-4614 at least five (5) working days prior to the Public Hearing date.